

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JULY 1984

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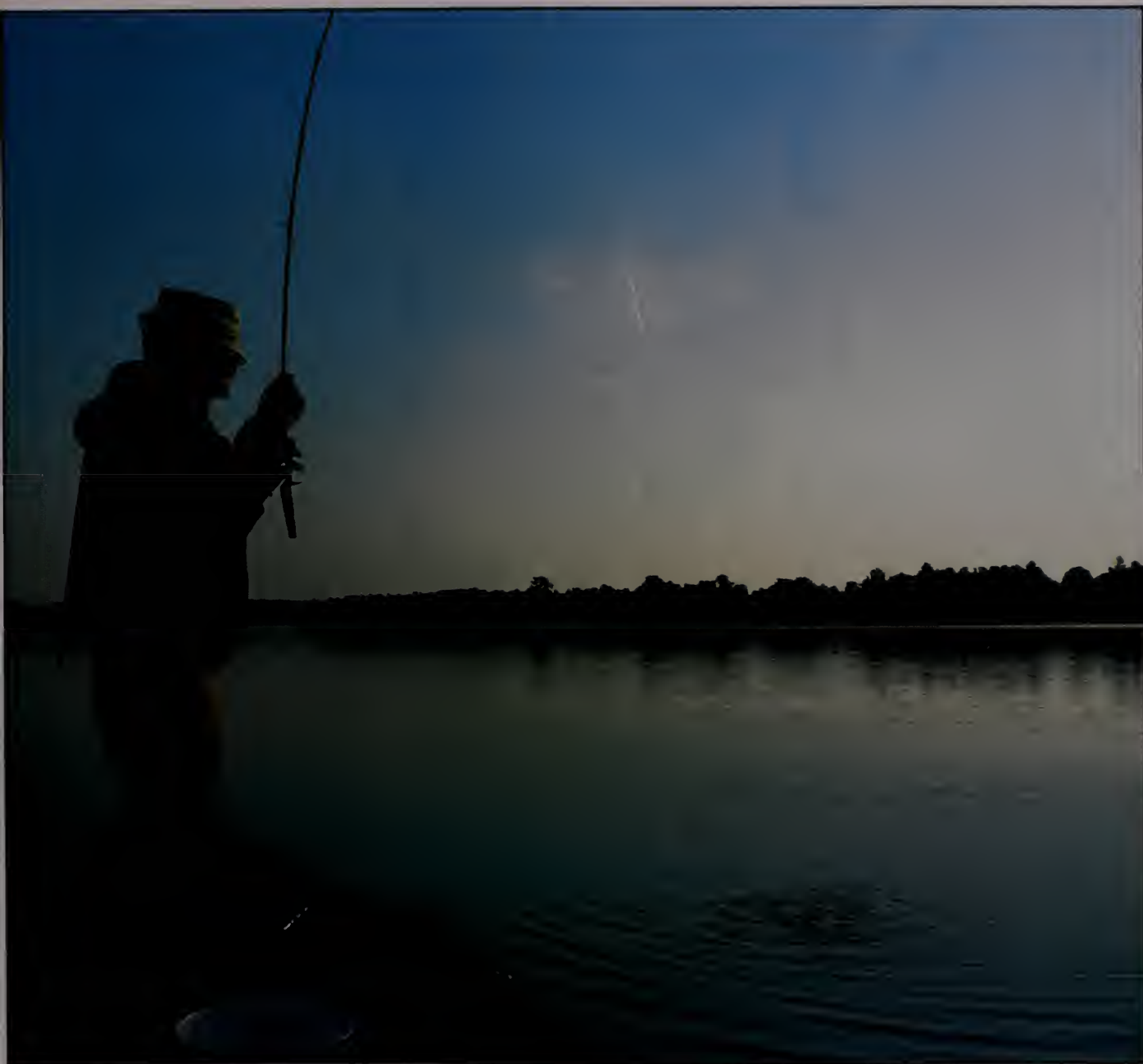
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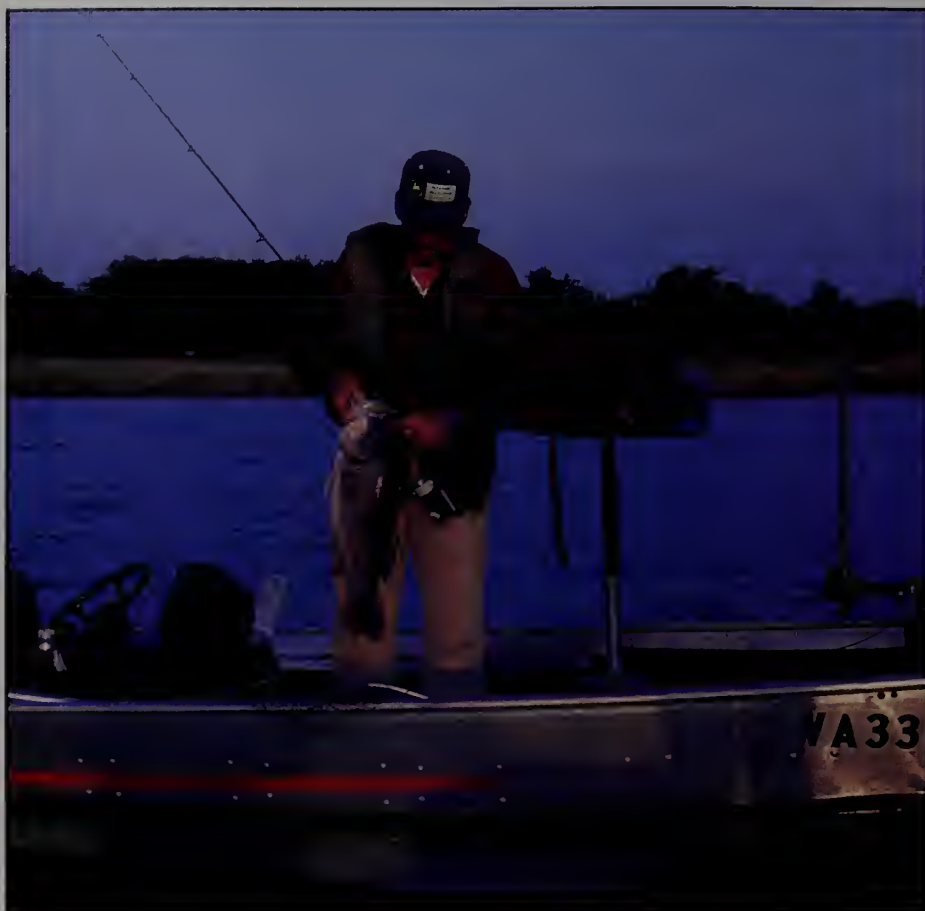
Largemouth bass by Duane Raver, Cary, North Carolina. One of the most exciting ways to catch largemouth is using topwater lures—everything happens on the surface, where you can see it, hear it, feel it. Gerald Almy tells you how beginning on page 3. Back cover: Order your Sportsman's Calendar today—don't be one of the hundreds who missed out last year. Photo by Robin Schroeder and Mel White.



Join the Topwater Brigade

Surface fishing for bass offers thrills
and chills unparalleled by other methods.

story & photos by Gerald Almy



unlock the jaws of at least a handful of bass willing to feed on top. Here's a look at the tactics that have worked for me on Virginia's bountiful bass populations over two decades of fishing the state's large and smallmouth waters.

First, a definition. Topwater bass fishing can be defined as fishing with lures that float and are fished either entirely on the surface, or occasionally twitched beneath it a few inches. There are several varieties of topwater lures worth stocking in your tacklebox. Here are brief descriptions of some of the major types, and tips on how you can fish them.

Slim minnow plugs or floater/divers. This plug is one of my favorites. Various brands include the Rapala, Rebel, Red Fin, Hellcat, Bang-O-Lure and Long A. These lures float on the surface at rest but dive a few inches when jerked or steadily retrieved. Some versions are made out of plastic, others are carved from balsa wood. There are times when both varieties will work, but in clear, calm water, or with finicky bass, I prefer the wood models such as the Rapala and Bang-O-Lure.

Many novice anglers don't even realize these plugs can be fished as surface lures. They chuck them out and reel them in steadily so they run four to eight inches deep—and they catch fish. But for more fun, and often bigger bass, try working them slower, on top.

Sometimes you can't work the slim minnow plugs too slowly for bass. In fact, often one of the best retrieves is to simply throw the plug out and let it sit there—as long as your patience can stand it on a lake, or until it floats down below you on a river. Usually a low twitching retrieve, simulating a wounded minnow struggling along, is the most productive presentation. But at times, jerking the rod tip a foot or two so the bait dives sharply beneath the surface, then bobs up, is the ticket to drawing bass strikes. Another lure motion that often drives bass wild is to retrieve the slim minnow steadily, but very slowly, so that it stays on top, creating a V-wake as it moves.

Stickbaits. These are similar to the slim minnow plugs, only they do not have a lip that makes them dive. You twitch and pull these lures from side to side to give them action. "Walking the dog," or making this lure move in short spurts from one side to the other, is a favorite way to fish stickbaits. These plugs are especially telling on largemouths feeding on shal-

(This page) Ranny Isenberg with an 8-pound bass that fell for a surface lure on Virginia's Back Bay. (Opposite page) Pete Cissel and Glenn Peacock with largemouths, most of which went for surface plugs and flies.

Do you find yourself getting just a trifle bored watching a float for hours on end while you wait for something to steal off with your bait? Does crawling a plastic worm across a piece of unseen structure 40 feet below the water's surface seem a bit tedious to you? More like work than sport? If so, it's time you joined the topwater brigade.

No other method of catching large and smallmouths offers the visual and auditory thrills that surface fishing for bass does. In this sport, every part of the angling scenario is played out before your eyes and ears—from the delicate splashdown of the lure, to the chugging or popping retrieve, to the vicious water-spraying attack from below of a belligerent bronzeback or feisty bigmouth. Often bass hooked on surface lures will do the bulk of their fighting on top as well, turning the entire fishing experience into a compelling drama acted out directly in front of you, instead of deep in the murky recesses of a lake over some waterlogged underwater structure.

I'm a surface fishing addict. I

admit it. When I'm trout fishing, my nymphs and streamer boxes rarely get pulled from my vest. Rather, one of the 300 or so dry flies I carry will be knotted to the end of my tippet. If I'm after bluegill, I rarely resort to dunking worms beneath a bobber, or even jig fishing with spinning gear. Instead, I flip out tiny cork poppers or brightly colored sponge rubber spiders so I can hear the kissing take of a bull bream and see the sharp swirl as he nabs the "insect" he thinks is struggling in the surface film.

When it comes to bass, whenever there's the remotest chance these fish can be taken on the surface, a topwater lure will be on the end of my line. And it will stay there until I either catch a bass or have it driven into my stubborn noggin that fishing on top is futile.

It's a funny thing, though. I've found that if you try a variety of surface lures with a number of different retrieves in good bass cover, there are surprisingly few situations where you can't find a combination that will

low bars and flats and on bait-crashing schools of bass that erupt in mid-lake during summer and fall months on large impoundments.

Propeller plugs. Similar to stickbaits, these plugs have a small propeller at one or both ends that rotates on the retrieve, kicking up a spray of water. Often these lures are fatter and more torpedo-shaped than the skinny stickbaits.

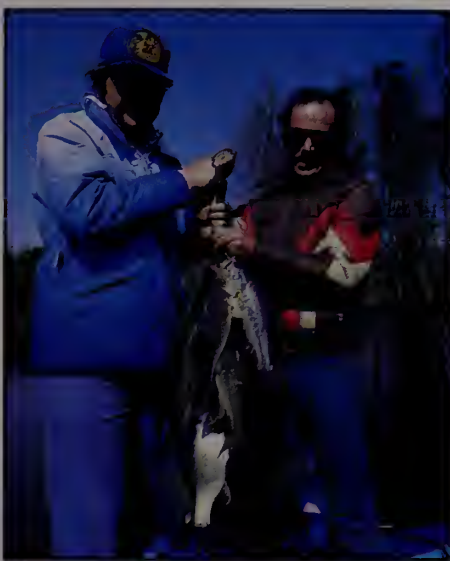
The Devil's Horse and Tiny Torpedo are two of the most popular propeller type lures used for bass in Virginia. My best method for fishing these lures is to work them with slow steady twitches, after allowing the lure to rest motionless for a few seconds following the cast. Sometimes a steady plodding retrieve is more productive, though, so don't hesitate to experiment with these lures. The Devil's Horse is especially good for largemouths, while the Tiny Torpedo is a topnotch river smallmouth offering that works particularly well in the fall.

Topwater wobblers. These plugs have a large wide lip at the front that makes them wiggle violently and kick up a spray of water as they're reeled in. They make lots of surface commotion and noise that can attract bass from long distances, and draw fish out of hard-to-reach cover beneath logs or far back in weedbeds.

The classic surface wobbler plug is the Jitterbug made by the Arbogast company. I stock these lures in sizes from two to four inches and use them for everything from tiny stream smallmouths to huge brackish-water bigmouths. Sonny Gregory, a guide on Back Bay for over 40 years, says he has one client who fishes with him for a week each year and never throws anything but a black Jitterbug for the entire time. And he catches his share of bass, according to Gregory, including some dandies in the five- to eight-pound class. Jitterbugs and other wobblers work well with a choppy, erratic retrieve and also with a steady swimming motion. They're especially deadly at night when reeled in at a smooth, slow pace. That soft gurgle seems to drive both large and smallmouths wild.

Chuggers. These lures have a concave face and make a popping or gurgling sound when retrieved. The Creek Chub Darter, invented in the 1920's, is one of the most famous. Two other well known chuggers include the Arbogast Hula Popper and Heddon Lucky 13.

The chuggers can be steadily retrieved just under the surface and have an erratic swimming motion that fools bass as well today as they did half a century ago when they were invented. The lures are most deadly, however, when worked with violent sweeps of the rod, followed by pauses that allow the plug to float back to the surface. This tactic used on the James, Shenandoah and Rapahannock Rivers has accounted for some of my largest smallmouths ever, including several specimens



approaching the magic four-pound citation mark.

Buzzbaits. These lures are comparative newcomers to the topwater bassing scene. They're favored by tournament fishermen, who like them because they work best with a fast retrieve that allows them to cover lots of water to locate fish quickly.

Buzzbaits have large blades that revolve around a shaft, creating considerable surface fuss as they churn through the water. You should begin your retrieve as soon as these lures land, or even before, so they are already coming back toward you as they enter the lake or river. Try various speeds from a ripping retrieve to one just fast enough to keep the lure on top. Buzzbaits are more productive for largemouths in lakes and broad tidal flowages than stream smallmouths, which are often spooked by the loud ruckus they create.

Several other types of lures can be fished on the surface, such as plastic or rubber frogs, weedless spoons and plastic worms, but these five categories described above constitute the major surface offerings employed for bass in Virginia. Most of them come

in a wide variety of color patterns, but you don't need to cover all the hues of a rainbow in your topwater plug selection. For the floater-diver minnow plugs, silver with a black or blue back or solid chrome are the best colors. For the remaining styles of surface plugs and buzzbaits, black, yellow, white, chartreuse, red and frog-finish are good choices. Basically, if you have some light and some dark colors in each lure type, you'll be set for virtually all fishing conditions.

Size of the lure is usually more important than color. For smallmouths in rivers and streams, stick to the smaller models, generally 1½ to 3 inches. The exception would be the slim minnow plugs, which can be productive on river bronzebacks in lengths up to 5 inches. For bigmouths in small ponds, stick to these same size offerings. For larger fish in big waters, plugs from 2½ to 5 inches and slim minnow lures up to 7 inches can be useful.

Tackle and line weight should be suited to the size fish you're after, the clarity of the water, and the time of day or night you're fishing. For clear water and midday fishing, stick to the thinnest lines possible. For dawn, dusk and night fishing, or fishing in murky water, you can use slightly heavier mono. For river smallmouths, six-pound line is a good all-around choice. Go to four-pound if the water is super clear, eight if the water is slightly stained and big fish are present. Spinning gear is the best choice of tackle for these line weights, and a medium stiff but lightweight rod of 5 to 6 feet is perfect.

For largemouth surface plugging, use a spin or baitcast outfit, a 5- to 6-foot rod and 8- to 17-pound line, depending on water clarity, time of day, size of bass and amount of cover you have to wrestle the fish from.

The best times to fish surface lures during summer and early fall are the first hour or two after daybreak, the hour before dusk, and throughout the night. The exception to this general rule would be on drizzly, overcast days, when bass may go on a feeding binge in the shallows just about anytime. Surface lures work best when the wind is calm or light and the surface is still or only lightly ruffled, since this is when the commotion and fuss they create is easiest for bass to detect from the greatest distance. However, I've enjoyed some excellent topwater fishing in windy conditions on occasion, so it's always worth giv-

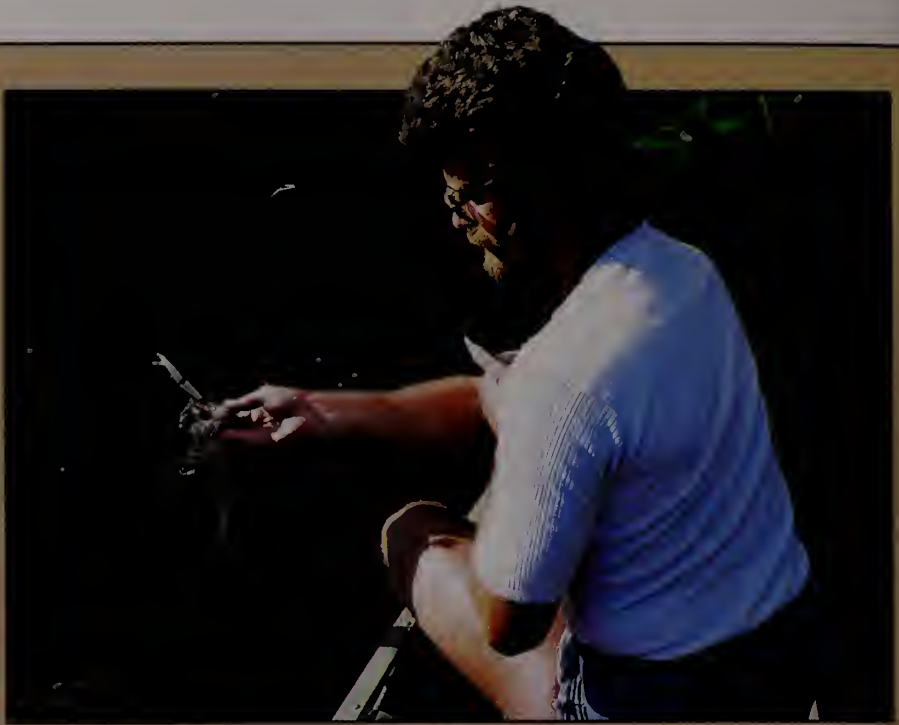
ing these lures a try, even if the water is a bit choppy.

Where should you cast your surface lures? That depends on where you're fishing. When going after river smallmouths, just about any bass in the flowage is within striking range of a surface lure, since few spots are deeper than eight or 10 feet. Often during summer the biggest bass will be holed up in the deepest, darkest holes. Don't think for a minute that a sassy smallmouth won't come up from his river bed lair to snatch your lure on top if it intrigues him. Limestone ledges, boulders, riffles, rapids, logjams, shaded shorelines, eddies, the tails of pools and tributary mouths are also good spots to probe with topwater offerings for flowing-water bronzebacks.

For largemouth bass in lakes and tidal rivers, probe bridge abutments, points, mouths of creeks, duck blinds, dock pilings, dropoffs, the edges of weedbeds, coves, sunken brushpiles, fallen logs, flooded willow, cypress and gum trees, shaded areas around docks, riprap near roads and stump fields. As a general rule, any structure found in water 10 feet deep or less is worth trying.

The one major exception to this rule is when you find schooling bass, not an uncommon occurrence during summer. Watch for churning water or birds dipping down during hot days in the middle of coves or out in the main lake. If you get there fast and throw a surface lure into the melee, you may find yourself rewarded with a jarring strike from a shad-eating largemouth. Black bass don't make as much commotion on top as stripers do, but by being alert you can often find small groups of these fish crashing bait on the surface in the middle of a 90-degree summer day. Throw a topwater plug into the swirling water and a strike is almost guaranteed.

Bass fishing doesn't have to be a mechanized, gadgetized, overly scientific sport if that's not your cup of tea. There are plenty of fish swimming in the shallows that are willing and eager to attack a topwater plug chugged past their lair for those of us who find the visual thrills of surface fishing too strong to pass up. Give these lures and tactics a try at dawn, in the soft warm glow of twilight, or in the coolness of a black summer night, and I think you'll agree there's no fishing quite like topwater plugging for bass. □



Lot Cooke lands a bass on a Rapala on a Shenandoah canoe trip.

Tips For Topwater Bassing

Here are a few additional tips to keep in mind when fishing topwater lures for bass:

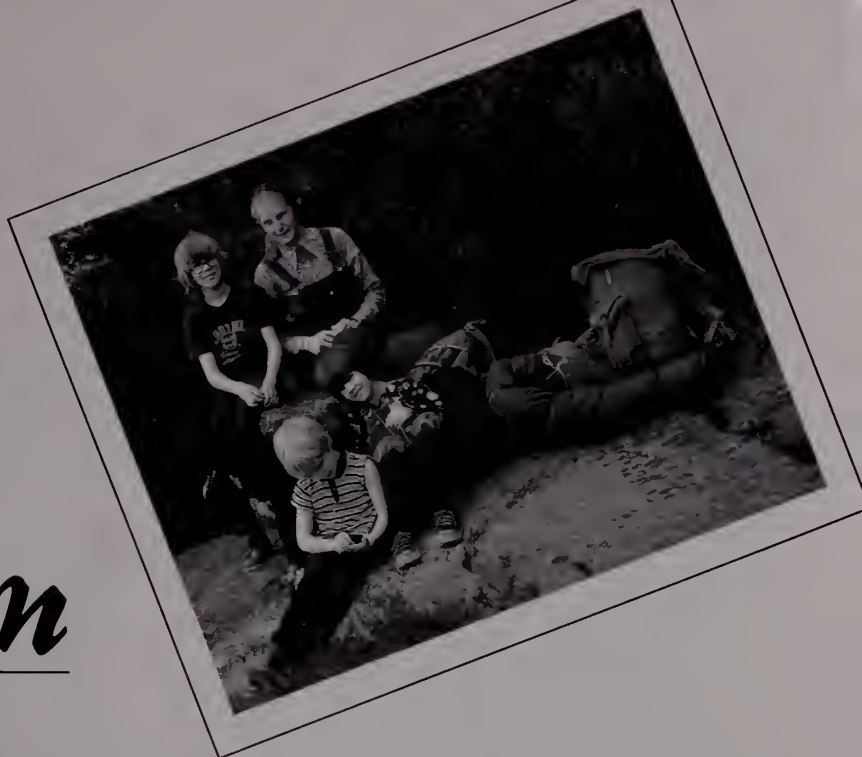
- Avoid using a swivel or snap, which can cause your line to be pulled down in the water in front of the lure and decrease its life-like action.
- Check all hook points for sharpness. Touch up with a file or hone if necessary.
- If you plan to release your bass, consider squeezing down the barbs with pliers so you can remove the hooks quickly and reduce chances of injuring the fish.
- Cast surface lures on a low, arching plane, rather than lofting them high in the air. You can cast more accurately this way and the lure will land more softly on the water and be less likely to spook the bass. Studies have also shown that bass can see lures arching low through the air and are more likely to strike them than a plug dropping straight down from a high cast.
- Keep your casts short. They'll arrive closer to your target and there will be less stretch in the line, allowing you to set the hooks more efficiently.
- Don't daydream when fishing surface lures. Concentrate intently on how the lure looks and sounds, so you can draw out the most seductive action from it. This will also keep you on your toes and ready to set the hooks instantly when a bass smashes the bait.
- If a spot looks good but your first cast doesn't draw a strike, continue to probe the location, trying different retrieves, or a different size, color or style of surface lure. □

story & photos by
Elizabeth Murray

Wilderness Celebration

A family spends
birthdays and other
special times
exploring Virginia's
wilderness areas.

Pictures from a family album; we celebrate July birthdays on outings to various wilderness areas (above right).



A family is characterized, in part, by its traditions. Families differ in the nature and number of those traditions. Ours admits to rather few, yet looking back over the last 10 years, I see a pattern to our summer hiking trips that comes close to a tradition.

Two of our three children have July birthdays, and as soon as the youngest was self-propelled, the choice offered for birthday activities was "party" or "outing." The answer came back "outing" frequently enough for a habit to be established. We do not always go to wilderness or proposed wilderness areas, but when we have, the occasions have been memorable.

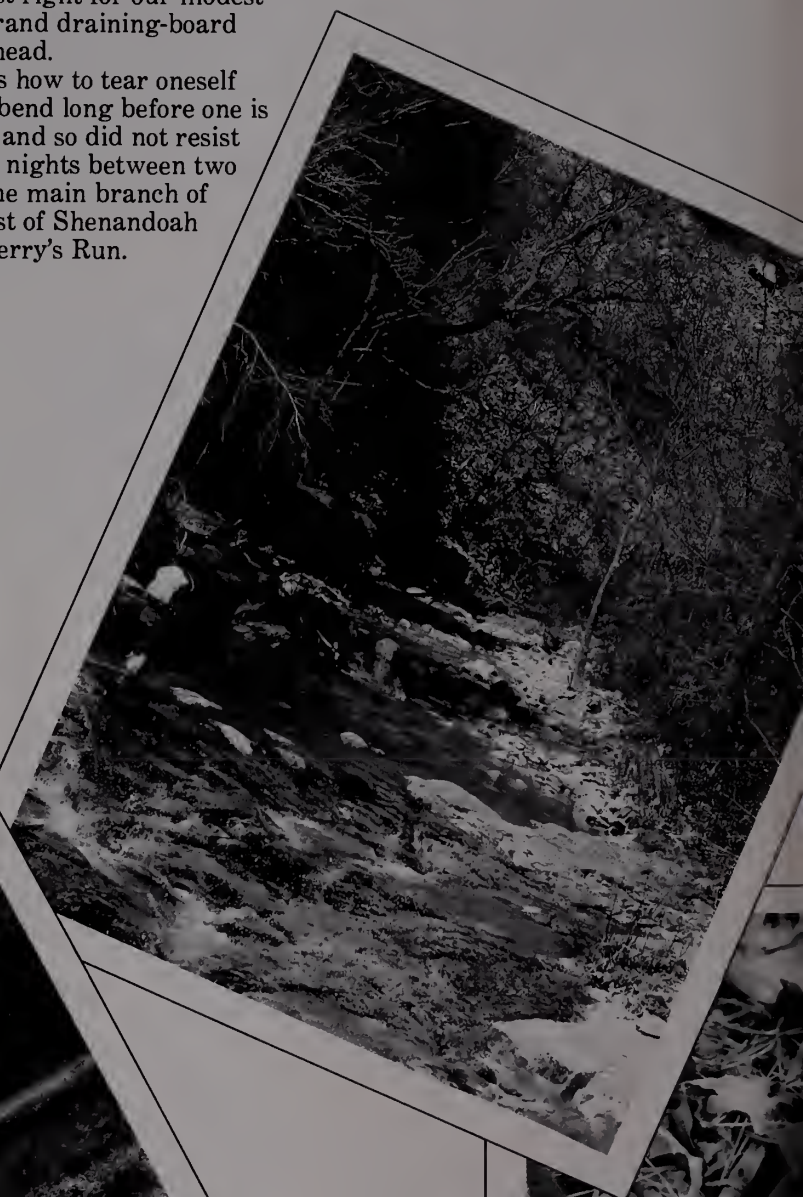
The sharpest memory from the first trip is of William's leg length, or rather lack of length. A mile of boulder-hopping for the rest of us was about five miles of ridge and valley negotiation for him and he became pretty tired. We started on foot from the Mountain Lake Biological Station in Giles County in southwest Virginia, and made our way across country that is now the Mountain Lake Wilderness Study Area. We encountered the boulders during the steep descent into the John's Creek drainage. Turning down John's Creek, we hiked to the Appalachian Trail. Walking towards Georgia on the Trail (which isn't necessarily south!) we stopped for the night at the John's Creek shelter. A packet of squashed doughnuts illuminated with matches formed a very acceptable birthday cake. Next day we made our way up onto the ridge, from Salt Pond Mountain to Potts Mountain and the gap through which runs the old road to West Virginia, the Salt Pond Turnpike. From there the route back to the field station was our own, and caused the children to question their father's navigating skills on several occasions.

The Mountain Lake Area is the largest of the current wilderness proposals and the reasons for its inclusion are perhaps the most obvious. It is the biggest roadless area in the Jefferson National Forest, and contains an unsurpassed variety of high mountain habitats. There has been a large volume of scientific research carried out in the whole region, because of the presence of the Mountain Lake Biological Station which has been operated by the University of Virginia since 1930.

The route we took for a birthday hike a few years later through the Beartown proposed wilderness area went through some of the wildest Virginia countryside we have ever seen. Beartown, Tazewell County, is on a ridge running up to Clinch Mountain, southwest of that extraordinary ring of high ridges enclosing Burke's Garden. The crest of Beartown has the spruce bog vegetation which is more typical of places much further north. The area was logged and burned many years ago and now the second growth on top has produced some almost impenetrable rhododendron thickets, the only alternative to which sometimes seemed to be very wet spruce bogs. I confess

to reconsidering my wilderness support as I emerged from a piece of this territory on my stomach pulling my backpack behind me. But I was berated for lack of vision and led nearby to a wonderful little camping place in the forest where the ground was dry, with water just below the surface, so that a little digging produced a clear six-inch pool just right for our modest needs. Next night we had a surface stream, with a grand draining-board rock, and a tall canopy of creaking spruce trees overhead.

In Ramsey's Draft, Augusta County, the problem is how to tear oneself past the perfect camp sites that appear 'round every bend long before one is ready to stop for the night. We started off in the rain and so did not resist for too long, soon choosing a spot where we spent two nights between two branches of the stream. A long day hike took us up the main branch of Ramsey's Draft to Hardscrabble Knob, along the crest of Shenandoah Mountain for about four miles, and back down into Jerry's Run.



Ramsey's Draft is a self-contained drainage with some of the finest stands of old-growth timber in Virginia. A state record-holding hemlock measures over 13 feet in circumference at waist height. Last summer Congressman James Olin, in whose district the area (and the tree) lie, led a walk down the draft, followed by some 60 people who wanted to talk to him about their concerns. Over the summer, Mr. Olin led hikes through every one of the proposed wilderness areas in his district, a heartening display of interest and concern. (On March 14, 1984, a Virginia wilderness Bill was introduced in the House of Representatives, co-sponsored by Olin (6th) and Boucher (9th), in whose districts the proposed areas mainly lie.) Our family joined the group that went with him up Rough Mountain in Bath County and into Rich Hole, sharing our enjoyment of wilderness with an unusually large crowd of people and sharing our birthday cookies with them and with the Congressman.

On Mount Rogers last summer, we were actually skirting the three proposed wilderness areas which make up part of the National Recreational Area. We wanted to have the whole family together on the state's highest mountain. Starting early from Grindstone campground, we arrived at the top in misty wet weather that was completely appropriate for that high, lush forest, and also gave us the place to ourselves. The "birthday cake" there was a box of granola bars. We travelled north (or at least towards Maine) on the Appalachian Trail from the summit. After a beautiful open walk along Wilburn Ridge past about 30 wild ponies, we finally came down through Grayson Highlands State Park.

One expects, and indeed needs, a rather high level of management in an area with the fame, and hence the usage of Mount Rogers, and the management is fairly well done. But the concept of the National Recreation Area embraces all kinds of activities, and the three proposed wilderness areas, Little Wilson Creek, Lewis Fork and Little Dry Run, make very good adjuncts to the whole plan.

Breaking with tradition, our family trips to St. Mary's River in Augusta County have not been in honor of birthdays. One year we went with members of Trout Unlimited who were escorting a group of reporters and television cameramen. The fishermen were anxious to publicize the need for wilderness protection for the best native trout stream west of the Blue Ridge. The wildflowers in the area are particularly lovely, too. Amongst many, bleeding heart, bell flowers, fetterbush and gay wings stand out for that day. There are scattered pockets of paper birch on the rocky north faces of the drainage. The paper birch is normally a much more northern species, and is quite rare in Virginia.

One Easter Sunday we walked up to Green Pond, a small acid lake near the crest of the ridge above St. Mary's. The place abounds with acid-loving sedges, sphagnum and a colony of cranberries. We counted our Easter eggs carefully before we hid them at the edge of the pond, and a combination of hunger and ecological conscience ensured that every egg was found. Like Ramsey's Draft, St. Mary's River is another self-contained drainage which lends itself so well to easy protection, and the area deserves the assurance of continuity which it would gain with wilderness status.

Where shall we go this year? The family is older now and more scattered, but when we do get together, we can all walk farther. We have yet to explore, as a family, the James River Face, the only designated Wilderness Area so far in Virginia outside the Shenandoah Park. We could traverse from there along Thunder Ridge, another of the areas in the current wilderness proposals. Thunder Ridge is a long, steep high ridge which forms a wild corridor between the James River Face and Apple Orchard Mountain. We could penetrate further than we went with Congressman Olin into Rich Hole, a lovely hidden valley in Rockbridge and Alleghany Counties. And if wilderness legislation for these areas becomes a reality, we can go with the assurance that there will always be beautiful places in Virginia to camp, on birthdays or any other days. □

Editor's note: As this edition went to press, the Virginia Wilderness Bill had passed in the House of Representatives, but those who opposed the bill are keeping the controversy over it alive.

(Far left) "One Easter Sunday we walked up to Green Pond, a small acid lake near the crest of the ridge above St. Mary's."

(Opposite) St. Mary's River in Augusta: "the best native trout stream west of the Blue Ridge." (Below) Skunk cabbage, one of the many wonders to discover in a wilderness area.



An English Naturalist In Colonial Virginia



Heron

photos courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Mark Catesby came to Virginia to visit his sister in 18th Century Williamsburg. The legacy of this “Colonial Audubon” includes the paintings of Virginia’s wildlife on these pages.

by Parke Rouse, Jr.

You’ve probably never heard of Mark Catesby, but he’s becoming a familiar name in Williamsburg. He was an English naturalist who came across the Atlantic to Yorktown in 1717 and spent seven years in Virginia, painting watercolors of birds and plants.

From this beginning Catesby went on to write and illustrate a book that became a minor classic. Today he’s called “The Colonial Audubon.” His hand-colored prints of southern birds, illustrations for the two volumes of his book, sell for up to \$1,000 apiece. And a rare first edition copy of Catesby’s book, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, is currently offered for sale at \$77,500.

Catesby is a romantic but little-known figure. Colonial Williamsburg in 1964 made a movie about him called *The Colonial Naturalist*. Recently *Southern Accents* Magazine featured him in an article, “Behold the Birds of the Air.”

In Williamsburg Catesby contributed to a widening world knowledge of what the American continent was like in the 1700’s. Until Colonial Williamsburg’s film,

few people except naturalists knew his name. But today—thanks to the film and a growing interest in birds—Catesby’s book and its prints bring high prices at auctions and bookshops.

What we know of Catesby is limited. He was a middle class Englishman who came to Virginia with his sketchbooks to visit his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Cocke. She was the wife of Dr. William Cocke, secretary of the Virginia colony, in early Williamsburg. Catesby’s biographers write, “He had gone to America with little more than a critical mind, a love of nature, and the hand of an untrained artist.” He became much more.

The young scholar found Virginia so intriguing he stayed awhile. He was attracted by the New World birds, animals, reptiles, insects, and plants he found in abundance. And he met several Virginians interested in the same things. One of them was John Custis, who lived on Williamsburg’s Francis Street, near where Colonial Williamsburg is erecting its DeWitt Wallace museum of decorative arts.

John Custis was a scholarly early Virginian who imported tulip bulbs from Holland and had a handsome



Wood Duck

garden. His portrait, holding a tulip bloom, gave him the nickname "Tulip" Custis. His house, which stood on the former Eastern State Hospital grounds and faced Williamsburg's Francis Street, has disappeared, but the brick kitchen house survives.

Custis' daughter-in-law was Martha Dandridge Custis, who after the death of her husband, Daniel Parke Custis, married George Washington.

Another Williamsburg friend of Mark Catesby was William Byrd II of Westover in Charles City County. He mentioned Catesby often in his secret diary, which survived him and was published several decades ago. Like many other educated colonials, Byrd collected and wrote about Virginia plants and animals for the edification of European scholars and readers.

In his travels during his years in Virginia, Catesby began to sketch birds, animals and plants in their natural habitat. Afterward he went back to England for a few years but his enthusiasm for natural history lured him back to the Carolinas, Florida, and the Bahamas in the years from 1722 to 1726. After his final return to

England, he wrote and illustrated his two-volume *Natural History*. The first volume was printed in 1731 and the second in 1743.

Catesby either colored the 230 prints of his first edition or supervised other artists who did. He included descriptions of 113 species. One critic has called it "the most significant work of natural history until that of John James Audubon, more than 100 years later." The *Natural History* went through several editions and revisions.

Born in 1683, Mark Catesby was 29 when he came to Virginia. He died in England in 1749 at 66.

Unlike artists before his time, Mark Catesby painted his birds with native backgrounds of trees and plants. Wrote Joe and Jean Mattison of Tampa in their article in *Southern Accents*, "His work is even more outstanding when one considers that Catesby gathered the materials, drew the sketches, engraved the copperplates, and "life-colored" at least some of the final engravings himself.

Catesby wrote his *Natural History* a few years before the Swedish botanist Karl Linnaeus had published his



Osprey



Mourning Dove

Linnaean system for classifying plants scientifically in 1758. However, the Englishman distinguished and named his species by the best means available to him. That helped Linnaeus, whose system has now become standard throughout the world.

Catesby's paintings are less beautiful than the famous Audubon bird prints a century later, but they make up for it in part with their naive charm. Write the Mattisons, "His subjects are somewhat stiffly and self-consciously posed for their portraits. . . There is little interplay between subject and environment. The redheaded woodpecker, for example, appears glued (with visible feet) to an unlikely small-sized trunk of a stylized oak, complete with oversized acorns."

But the Mattisons attempt to offset Catesby's shortcomings by pointing out that "these birds all had to be drawn from dead specimens, and there is little more in the artwork, however brilliant or original, that suggests life." Sometimes he painted specimens distorted by rigor mortis.

Mark Catesby was chosen as the subject of a Williams-

amsburg film in 1964 after John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the project's founder, had become interested in motion picture footage of birds and animals taken out west. He admired the work of the two naturalist photographers, the husband-and-wife team of Julie and Ty Hotchkiss, now of Williamsburg. Then someone at Williamsburg suggested, "Why not have the Hotchkisses photograph Virginia wildlife for a movie recreating the Williamsburg years of Mark Catesby?"

That's how the *Colonial Naturalist* film was born. A California scriptwriter, Lawrence Watkin, formerly a professor of English at Washington and Lee University, was brought East to write the screenplay, and the picture was filmed under the direction of Arthur Smith, then Colonial Williamsburg's audio-visual director.

To get their footage of bluebirds, cardinals, waterfowl and other Virginia natives, the Hotchkisses set up their photography blinds in Tidewater fields. After many months of patient shooting, they had accumulated excellent footage of birds and animals without harming or frightening them. *The Colonial Naturalist* was the result.



Skunk

The 55-minute film premiered in 1965, and it immediately fanned interest in Catesby. His bird prints have since become sought-after collector's items. True, his *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and The Bahama Islands* may not bring the \$1,400,000 which the original four-volume elephant edition of Audubon's *Birds of America* recently brought at an auction in London. But Catesby is gaining on Audubon, the best-known of all American ornithologists.

Catesby was only one of many English, French and other European naturalists of the 18th and 19th Centuries who left us pictures of birds and animals of North America. Another was Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), who was born in Scotland and came to America after the Revolution.

Still another was naturalist P. John Selby, who in 1825-1829 published another important bird book. And in the following decades, John James Audubon produced his celebrated masterpieces. Like Catesby, Audubon spent most of his time in the South. He lived for awhile in Louisiana and then in Key West,

where his fine 19th Century house is now a museum.

In Audubon, write the Mattisons, "bird portrayal was honed to a fine artistic edge. Not only are the creatures accurately shown in scale, but they are also lifesize." Audubon is to birds what Rembrandt was to 18th century painters. He was the Great Master.

Audubon's original drawings are now owned by the New York Historical Society, which bought them from Audubon's widow in 1863 for a mere \$4,000. They are exhibited at the Society's New York Museum.

Catesby and Audubon had much to do with the growth of popular interest in birds and their preservation. As a result of their work, Rachel Carson found millions of receptive readers when she wrote *Silent Spring* in the 1960's and wakened America to the threat of pesticides. Since then, "the bird people" have proliferated.

"Behold the birds of the air," says the Bible. Thanks to naturalists like Catesby and Audubon, they're with us to make the world brighter and sweeter. Some species are even more numerous than in those long ago days of Mark Catesby and his watercolors. □

LOW WATER

Trout Tactics

*By mid-summer,
the water is low and
the trout are wary.*

*story & photos by
Harry W. Murray*

As I parked our camper beside Laurel Fork, I was impressed by the beautiful serenity of the area. This is one of the longest wild brook trout streams in Virginia, gaining its input from the high mountain peaks forming the boundary between Virginia and West Virginia in Highland County.

I was not surprised to find that we had the stream all to ourselves. We were a long way back from the large population centers, and besides, it was mid-summer. The crowds of anglers often encountered in the early part of the season were long gone and all that remained were those fish which were smart enough to survive this far into the season.





*T*ROUT fishing in summer presents a two-fold challenge: low water combines with savvy fish to make landing one of these beauties a thrill reserved for the well-prepared angler. Trout don't survive 'til July by being stupid! (Left) Learn to spot likely trout havens such as beaver dams, log jams and other small impoundments, or streams with good drainage. Tackle, of course, is another important consideration (top). If you take care in choosing and presenting the right flies, chances are you'll be able to land a beauty like this wild mountain brook trout (above).

I was with the late Joe Brooks, Virginia's most famous fisherman, so I was eager to draw on his advice in this situation. Joe felt that the further one went up these mountain streams, the more numerous the fish became but the smaller they got. Conversely, the further one went downstream, assuming good water temperatures, the fewer the fish were but the larger they ran. We chose to camp at the lower end of the stream and work our way up. We actually parked the camper in West Virginia right where Laurel leaves the Virginia mountains on its northern course headed for the Potomac River. Since we had only Virginia licenses, we had to walk upstream a short distance to start fishing.

There were many little yellow stoneflies hatching off of the stream, and in some of the larger pools, we could see several nice trout on feeding stations.

Easing into the first pool inside the Virginia boundary I spotted a nice brookie holding on a feeding station in the tail of the pool. Though these trout are seldom extremely selective, I felt I could give myself a slight advantage if I matched the natural flies at least in size and color. I must have made a good choice, because on the first cast that brookie rose gently and sucked in my size 16 Blond Goofus as it drifted down to him.

Apparently the early season pressure had not hurt the trout population, because we caught brookies in almost every pool. The only times we failed to connect were when we spooked the trout. When we failed to stay low and approach each pool slowly, we saw the brookies run for cover. We also found we got fewer refusals if we used delicate leaders tapered down to 6x. The heavier leaders looked almost rope-like out on those flat pools and in some cases they actually spooked the fish.

Several miles upstream we found some good-size feeder streams entering the main stream. I had heard rumors of some huge brook trout who made their homes in the beaver dams on these feeders. I fished up each of these feeders quite a way, and although I found them to contain many fish, the giants I sought never materialized. Maybe they were just too smart for me. After all, big fish don't get that way by being stupid.

Walking back down to our camper at dusk that evening, we agreed that Laurel Fork was truly one of the finest mountain brook trout streams we had ever fished, and that its long and diverse drainage provided the good summer water levels we had found.

Encouraged by our findings on this trip, we decided to fish another mountain trout stream the following weekend. Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains contain many good trout streams but Naked Creek on the west slope has always held a special appeal for me. It is beautiful and productive but there is another reason this stream has special meaning for me.

The story goes that many years ago there were no trout at all above the 40-foot-high waterfalls on the now-famous Falls Branch of this stream. Supposedly one of Virginia's early trout angler-conservationists named Jack Sperry, and his Indian helper Joe Recer (no, this isn't another Lone Ranger and Tonto story), actually fished the stream below the falls and kept the brookies alive in buckets until they could take them above the falls and return them to the stream. This went on for several years and dozens of trips. I do not know if this story is true or not, but I do know that today there are wild brook trout all the way up to the Skyline Drive on top of

the mountain. Besides, when I was a kid, Jack Sperry was my first angling tutor, so I would like to believe the story is true.

Checking out Naked Creek that following weekend, we found even better fishing than we had experienced on Laurel Fork but for an unusual reason. The previous fall we had received particularly heavy snow before many of the trees had dropped their leaves. The combination of this early damp snow and the thick foliage was more than many of the trees could withstand. Many very large trees toppled all over the mountain. Due to the low hollows in which this stream is located, it received more than its share of these fallen trees. Lying across the stream, they were much like dams. Later that fall, when the standing trees dropped their leaves many fell into the stream and were collected on these dams.

By the time we got to the stream that summer, this situation had produced a very favorable condition for the trout. These small, natural dams raised the water levels upstream of them as much as 3 feet in some of the pools. In many of the low gradient areas where normally there was little holding water suitable for sustaining the trout through the summer, we now had many good trout homes. Naturally all of these downfalls presented some problems for us, forcing us to climb across and through them. I'll admit that I felt like I was grouse hunting, having to fight the slash in a newly cut-over area, but my efforts were amply rewarded.

In more than 20 years of fishing Naked Creek, I had never seen this great a trout population. The downfalls had provided the depth to the pools which prevented predators from having such easy access to these brookies. This advantage was readily apparent but as I started fishing the stream I realized these little dams had produced a second and maybe more valuable gift for the trout.

This was manifested to me in a subtle two-phase lesson. Standing below one of these little dams, I could clearly see the surface of the entire pool above me; but due to my low angle, I could not see down into the water well enough to spot the trout. As I was considering the best method to approach this pool I saw a delicate rise-form in the middle of the pool as a brookie sucked under a natural insect. Concentrating on the pool to determine the trout's exact location, I saw a second rise but this time it was about 6 feet away from where the first take had been. Less than a minute later a third rise-form occurred 4 feet downstream of the first. What was going on? I was accustomed to these fish getting on a specific feeding station and taking everything the current brought them. But here, I either had a pool full of fish or something tricky was going on.

Rather than shoot a cast up into the pool at one of these three feeding stations, I decided to circle around the pool to gain a better vantage point. Carefully I crawled up a high bank to the side of the pool. My polarized sunglasses allowed me to see well into the pool and I got quite an education that day. There had been only one trout feeding in that pool and he was a dandy. Apparently his years of experience had taught him how to make the most of each stream situation by applying specialized feeding techniques to gain the most food from

any condition. The damming effect of these fallen trees had slowed the normally roly-poly currents of this little stream rendering a nice flat pool with a much more gentle flow. As the abundance of ants and beetles fell into the stream from the trees overhead these flat pools collected and held them for the hungry trout. The reduced low rate enabled the trout to alter their feeding methods to take full advantage of these waiting terrestrials.

A selection of the flies the author recommends (right).

The big brookie I was watching had chosen to cruise about the big flat pool only inches below the surface and take these insects as he came to them. I quickly realized that if I expected to catch this fish I was going to have to be as flexible in my angling techniques as he was in his feeding form. Simply casting to the best normal feeding stations in the main current would be useless here. As I watched this beautiful trout feed in the now-familiar pool before me, he showed me the rules by which I would have to play to have a chance at him.

Though no Olympic figure skating judge would have given him very high marks, he was definitely cruising and feeding in an established, repeated pattern. As I watched him take an ant on the far side of the pool, I had a pretty good idea which way he would turn to go looking for the next. I tapered my leader down to 6X and put on a number 18 black fur dry ant. Crawling down to the pool I decided to let him take a few more naturals before making my cast. This would allow him time to feel all was normal in case I had been a little noisy in my approach. It would also give me time to make a last-minute evaluation of his cruising pattern so I would know precisely where to drop my fly.

As it turned out, his third rise was at the upper end of his cycle, and after taking it, he turned and headed back down the pool and straight at me. Common sense told me that if I made my cast now the flash of my flyrod right in front of him would scare the spots off him. Nervously, I waited until he turned slightly and started in his anticipated cruising path across the pool. I dropped my ant about 2 feet in front of him. He showed no hesitation as he approached it and sucked it under with all the apparent confidence he had exhibited for the last 15 minutes. After several strong, bulldogging runs and one determined try at diving into the brush pile at the dam, I succeeded in landing him. He really was one of the finest mountain brook trout I had seen in years, and after photographing him I gently returned him to his home pool. I was very glad I had done this because on each succeeding trip that year I anxiously anticipated that one-on-one repeat confrontation with the fish we came to call "the king." Sometimes he won and sometimes we won, but he taught us a great deal.

On that hot summer day on Naked Creek, "the king" was only one of many nice trout we caught. Conventional tactics produced some fish but most were caught by observing cruising patterns and dropping an ant in front of them.



For summer conditions on these small mountain streams, I find I get my best results with a delicate fly rod about 7½ feet long which balances with a number 4 line. There is little need for a sinking fly line. I prefer to use a double taper or weight forward floating line with a delicate front taper. Leaders about 8 feet long and tapered to 4X, 5X, and 6X will cover most of our needs. Our fly selection need not be extensive but should provide an adequate variety of silhouettes due to the broad number of insects we may encounter. I always carry light Goofus drys, sizes 14-16; cinnamon and black dry ants, sizes 16-20; Crowe beetles sizes, 14-20; light Cahills drys, size 14-18; and Mr. Rapidan drys, size 14-16. I fish drys most of the summer but I still carry a few nymphs just in case I have to go under. I like the pheasant tail nymph in 14-16, B.W. Olive in size 18, and sulfur nymph in size 16. Some anglers like to use streamers during the summer, but keep them on the small side. Favorites are wooly buggers in size 10, black nose dace and Mickey Finns in size 8 and regular muddlers in size 10.

The lower part of Laurel Fork is easily accessible from Route 17 south of Cherry Grove, West Virginia. You can reach Naked Creek by taking Route 609 off of Route 340 south of Shenandoah, Virginia. Naked Creek is also accessible by a trail down the mountain from the Skyline Drive. Maps for Laurel Fork are available from the Forest Supervisor's Office, George Washington National Forest Headquarters, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801, and from Murray's Fly Shop, Box 156, Edinburg, Virginia 22824. Maps for Naked Creek are available from the Superintendent's Office, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, Virginia 22835 and from Murray's Fly Shop. □

Those Intrepid Insects

You may not be a fan of your local insect population, but they are remarkable. In the face of great obstacles, they prevail. They benefit us in many ways, and some are nice to look at, too.

(Clockwise from top left photo) Moths and butterflies are among the most graceful and beautiful of the insects; this is a luna moth. This dragonfly looks as if it's a space-age helicopter about to take off. The green eggs of this lacewing are suspended from the ends of hairlike stalks or strands; they look like hatpins. The honey bee is one of the best known of the insects, and its pollination and honey-producing chores are equally well-known.

Did you know that insects occur almost everywhere on earth, and that their numbers make up more than half of all the living things in the world? Perhaps that doesn't surprise you if you're a gardener! Well, how about this: the lowly ant, that despoiler of picnics, is capable of carrying objects weighing 450 times its own weight! This herculean strength is true of insects in general. Does that give you a new respect for "bugs"?





Michał Gajowski



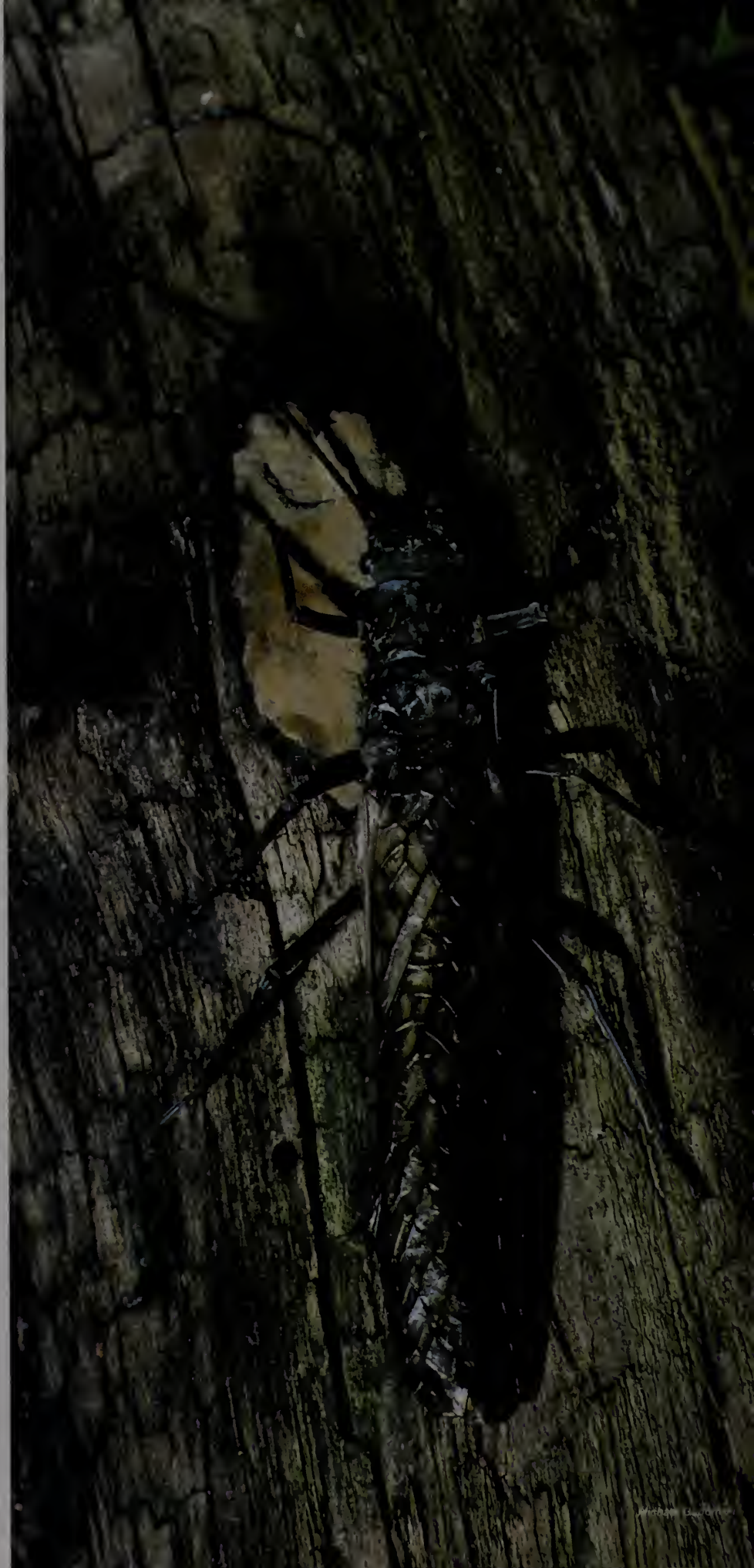
Michał Gajowski

(Clockwise from large photo)
Anglers are familiar with the stonefly. Its larvae are among the favored foods of freshwater fish. Though they are not abundant, swallowtail butterflies are familiar to many, perhaps because of their distinctive physical characteristics. Note the tail on this tiger swallowtail. Treehoppers belong to the same suborder as the ubiquitous cicadas. This insect sometimes develops a hornlike growth which enables it to sit on a twig and pass for a thorn, thus protecting the treehopper from its enemies.

Insects belong to the phylum Arthropoda and the class Insecta. There actually is an order of "bugs," Hemiptera, which includes water bugs, bed bugs, water striders, stink bugs and leaf bugs. Despite the fact that we refer collectively to most small insects as bugs, only those in this order really are.

You may take a dim view of insects in general, especially in the summertime when you're waging war among the tomatoes. But, of course, insects do have their good points. Some play essential roles in the pollination of various plants, including fruit trees. Others provide such things as honey, wax and silk. Insects are food for many other animals, fish and birds. And some even eat those less desirable species of insects. These creatures have been used in the treatment of disease and in other ways which are of significant use to science.

Besides, some of them are just plain nice to look at. So we've assembled a few for you to admire on these pages.—Sarah Bartenstein





Bill Ivy



Michael Gadomski

story & photos
by Carl "Spike" Knuth

Chesapeake

S P O T



A trip to "the big pond" yields plenty of these small, but delicious, panfish. No complicated tactics or tackle—just fun and fish.

Skipper George Boltz of Richmond, was steering a course towards a number of other boats off to the east. His aging but beloved launch, the Nutz and Boltz, cut through the calm waters of the Chesapeake Bay from Middlesex County. We were treated to breakfast on board: egg sandwiches, orange juice and coffee. Lin Scott of Ashland had invited me to go along with a group of his friends and business cohorts to enjoy a day of fishing on the "big pond." We had left Deagle's Marina at Deltaville about 9:00 a.m. and were already feeling the late July sun.

We were after one of the most sought-after fishes in the Bay, the spot. Easy to catch, abundant, and tasty on the table, this panfish is extremely popular—and the crowd of boats already out this morning attested to this. The spot is a small, deep-bodied fish. The male makes a croaking sound from its swim-bladder typical of members of the croaker family; it is the smallest member of that family. The spot's colors vary from bluish gray above with gold or bronze sides to silvery-white below, marked with a dozen or so yellowish or brownish bars on its sides. Its maximum length is about 14 inches and its average weight is around a half a pound; one-pounders are uncommon in Virginia. A two-pound spot is a large one! The spot's mouth is small and horizontal and it feeds on a variety of bottom-dwelling crustaceans and worms as well as plankton.

Although it ranges from Cape Cod to as far as Mexico in the Gulf, it is common from New Jersey, where it is known as "Lafayette," to North Carolina. In Virginia waters, spot arrive in the Norfolk area beginning in early May. They peak July through September. Then they begin moving back south from Virginia about mid-October, at which time the big "golden" spot are most plentiful. Spot inhabit salt and brackish waters, and they travel in large schools from deep water to shallow, coastal marshes and up the many big tidal rivers to Virginia, including the Potomac, York, James and Rappahannock. We were fishing a few miles from the mouth of the Rappahannock.



"Spot inhabit salt and brackish waters, and they travel in large schools from deep water to shallow, coastal marshes and up the big tidal rivers to Virginia."



Chumming while still-fishing is an effective method for catching spot.

Spot are usually found over mud and sand bottoms and around oyster reefs. You can catch them from June to October by drift-fishing until a school is located; by anchoring in known "hot spots" (or should I say "spot spots") and still-fishing; or chumming while still-fishing. Bloodworms are probably the best baits overall, but spot also take shrimp,

squid strips, sandworms, peeler crabs and cut-up spot.

Linwood cut up a good portion of both squid strips and bloodworms.

One of the pleasures of spot fishing is the simplicity of tackle. We used the common and popular Chesapeake Bay bottom-rig, available in most tackle shops. It is fixed with a bell, bank or pyramid-type sinker. Extending from the

main line on the rig above the sinker are two snelled, number four hooks. For smaller spot, number six or eight hooks can be used. Many anglers use bottom rigs that have "spreaders"—devices that keep the hooks in place, holding the leaders outward to prevent tangling.

Rods and reels for spot can vary from the latest in spinning gear to an old saltwater rod and reel. Actually, light freshwater tackle, the same basic tackle you may use for crappies or bluegills, is entirely adequate for this type of fishing. Most of the members of our party were using medium freshwater or light saltwater tackle.

We merely allowed our two-hooked rigs to go right to the bottom, one baited with bloodworms and one with squid. Holding a tight line from the sinker up, we could easily detect the quick, rapping bites of the spot. Spot fishing can become quite a party, taking on the air of a social event. It isn't as serious as some types of fishing. Many fish are missed, but no matter—there's enough bait and "plenty of fish in the sea." A good supply of food and drink plus the comraderie, the whoopin' and hollerin', plenty of sun and fresh air all make a spot fishing trip something special.

Spot aren't the only fish to be caught. On our trip, an occasional school of small blues came through and the action became quite spirited. Small sea trout, croaker, flounder and sea bass also found their way into our ice chests.

If you fish spot in the Deltaville area, refer to the Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Atlas produced by Alexandria Drafting Company, 417 E. Clifford Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22305. This publication is helpful in finding roads, landmarks and facilities in the area. Bait can be purchased at numerous tackle shops and grocery stores in the area. Be sure you take adequate life preservers, suntan lotion, hats and plenty of cool drinks. Don't forget a big cooler and ice for the fish. Saltwater fish spoil quickly, so keep them iced and get them cleaned and frozen as quickly as possible. A platter of spot, fried golden brown, will keep you going back for more. □

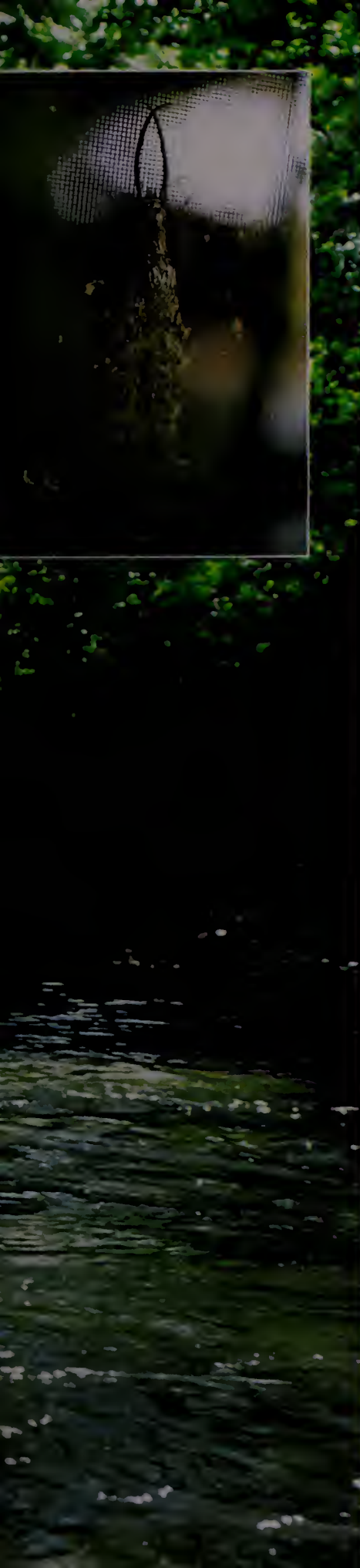
A person wearing a cap and waders is standing in a shallow stream, holding a fishing rod. The stream is surrounded by dense green foliage and trees, creating a lush, natural setting. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery.

Match the Hatch for *Smallmouths*

Learn to imitate the three important hatches for smallmouth bass: damselflies, giant stoneflies and hellgrammites. You'll take home a stringer-full of the big ones.

story & photos by
Harry W. Murray





(Large photo) Author fly fishing to smallmouth. (Inset photos, left to right) Nymphs, top to bottom, Murray's hellgrammite, Charlie Brooks' stonefly nymph, damselfly nymph. Adult giant stonefly. Adult dobsonfly.

Mention fishing a hatch of aquatic insects to a trout angler and he logically envisions beautiful pools covered with hundreds of size 14 Grey Fox (*Stenonema fuscum*) gently riding the surface.

This beautiful little cream mayfly has spent 363 days on the stream bottom and is now emerging to the surface. He is waiting only a few more seconds for his wings to dry so he can make his delicate flight to the streamside vegetation. After one day molting, he returns to the stream the next evening for his inspiring mayfly dance during which he will mate, then fall dead on the stream, what the angler calls a spent spinner. The annual cycle starts all over again that same evening from the eggs his mate deposits onto the stream.

This phenomenon occurs on all of our bass streams and the panfish really appreciate it, but the only bass who seem to pay much attention are the very small ones. The real hatch which the serious smallmouth angler should be looking for is the one which hasn't occurred yet. No, you're not going to have to study the stars or consult the tea leaves for the answer to this. Close observation and relying on past experience will usually help you determine the best tactics in a given situation.

Several years ago I was paddling a canoe for my friend Benny Coe on my favorite part of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. We launched the canoe at the Route 675 bridge at Luray and fished our way about three miles downstream. The fishing had been so-so with a moderate number of small bass, but we had not landed a single big smallmouth all day.

That evening Benny stayed in the bow of the canoe as I paddled back up to the bridge. My intention was to go from one hot spot to another and have Benny shoot just a few casts into the best area. We had not gotten very far when I heard a disturbance coming from a car-size brush pile in mid-river. Closer observation revealed that almost every twig in that brush pile had a damselfly resting on it and the air over it was stacked up with more damselflies as if looking for landing space. Cautiously I eased the canoe closer to get Benny within cast-

ing distance. He took six good smallmouth bass on the first eight casts.

What was actually happening here to turn the bass on was the action of the damselfly nymphs. From their assorted stream bottom homes, these nymphs had moved over to this huge brush pile to use it as a ladder for their emergence into the open air, their new environment for the adult portion of their lives.

The bass realized this mass exodus was underway and had moved in to take advantage of the heavy concentration of nymphs. Occasionally we would see a bass take an adult fly off the surface, but most chose the nymph or emerging stage. A hatch? Yes, but the insects the bass cashed in on never really made it that far.

I have found smallmouth gorged on adult damselflies but in each situation it has been immediately below one of the old power dams on our larger rivers. I hardly ever see these bass take the flies from the surface, in fact, I seldom see the flies on the surface, but after landing several bass and seeing their throats full of damselflies, I finally got the hint and switched over to a damsel nymph or wet fly version. I have never decided whether adults riding the surface are drowned coming over the fall, or if adults flying in the air below the dam get too close to the down-rushing water and are accidentally drowned. For whichever reason, it is an often-duplicated, predictable situation; any chance I get from mid-summer until fall, I work both the brush piles and the downstream side of these dams well with damselfly nymphs.

The dobsonfly is that big, mean-looking thing with gigantic pinchers on the male which just defy us to try to pick it up. I wish we had fishable hatches of these flies. This, I'm sure, would cause most of our bass to drop all caution and attack like a 2-year old youngster diving into a bowl of jello.

Unfortunately, our bass seldom get a shot at the adult dobsonflies but they know the larva form, which we call the hellgrammite, very well.

The hellgrammites live in the well-oxygenated riffles. In late spring or early summer, the older of these larvae will crawl onto shore in order to pupate. They will complete their next two life stages there, before laying eggs on the under side of leaves, tree limbs, and bridges. These clusters later feed thousands of eggs back into our rivers. These egg masses can easily be seen on leaves over the rivers,

appearing like little gobs of cotton.

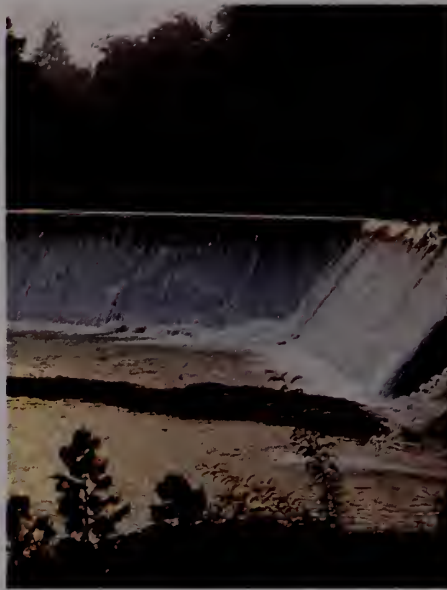
Lefty Kreh, who hasn't missed many of the best bass steams here in the East, came out to fish the Shenandoah with me last summer. Upon spotting these hellgrammite egg masses, he was overwhelmed. He said that he had never witnessed as great a concentration of hellgrammite eggs in his life.

The bass know they have plenty to choose from and will often be found feeding heavily in these well-oxygenated riffles. Don't worry about being a week late in fishing one of these good riffles with a hellgrammite imitation, as you might with mayflies. Many of the hellgrammites are in Virginia rivers two or three years, so you can always be sure that some of them are there for the hungry bass.

The third important hatch for the bass is the giant stonefly. Of course, there is a decided difference between the insects we've been discussing and what we, in Virginia, think about our trout feeding on. All three of the insects we're discussing range from one to three inches, and by any standards, that's a lot of groceries. These giant stoneflies especially have the capacity to excite big fish. I've seen brown trout of gigantic proportions in the lower Yellowstone River fall to a well-tied stonefly. But, the one which really shocked me was a 28-pound lake trout I landed in the Atakonac River in Labrador while fishing for large Canadian brookies. When we opened the laker up we found he really relished the stonefly nymphs because his stomach contained two double handfuls of these two-inch-long nymphs.

All sportsmen who have done any work in the direction of cleaning up our rivers are entitled to take a bow here, because good populations of large stoneflies are indicative of improving water quality. They like heavy runs of well-oxygenated water and a bottom covered with rocks grapefruit-size or larger.

The emergence of these insects takes place off and on through most of the summer. Unfortunately, as in the case of the first two insects, this robust little character moves to the sides of the main stream and then walks out on dry land to shed his nymph shuck and fly away. Our bass seldom get a shot at an adult stonefly until the females come back at a later time to lay their eggs. We need not hold off in our fishing until this occurs, but by closely watching for these stonefly nymph shucks on



Smallmouth gorge on damselflies immediately below dams.

streamside rocks and logs, we know there is action at hand. Many good smallmouths move out into these shallows to take advantage of these migrating insects. It is now up to us to do our part.

Let's grab our tackle and catch some nice smallmouth bass by matching the hatch—with nymphs.

Whether I am fishing a damselfly nymph imitation around brush piles, or my hellgrammite fly in a heavy riffle, or a Brooks' stonefly nymph in a fast, boulder-filled run, my tactics are much the same.

I like to approach any anticipated hot spot from below and slightly to one side. I cast my well-weighted nymph upstream about 30 feet and five feet out into the productive-looking water. I quickly get any slack line under control by stripping it in with my line hand. Once this is accomplished, I try to retrieve my nymphs at the same rate the current is pushing them downstream. Nature has provided us with a slight advantage in the game at hand. All three of these nymphs are strong swimmers and are by nature quite active. This allows us a broad range of retrieves and actions in addition to the basic dead drift. While retrieving my nymphs at the speed of the current, I will often impart a sharp six-inch stripping action with my line hand or a delicate three-inch rod tip lift.

This small extra action has two advantages. The first and most obvious is that it helps convey the

action of the living insect to the bass. The second, and more significant advantage, is that it allows the angler to stay in constant contact with his drifting nymphs. This can be almost invaluable in detecting the strike as our nymph is picked up by a waiting bass. I like to watch my line or leader as close to the nymph as possible, and upon the slightest unnatural movement or hesitation, I set the hook firmly with both my fly rod and line hand.

Well chosen tackle can simplify this nymph matching game for bass and eliminate many of the problems before they occur. I have switched to a 9-foot Scott graphite rod which is built explicitly for bass fishing. These rods have stronger tips than are found on the normal salmon, trout, or steelhead rods which would carry the same 8- or 9-weight line size. I find this rod ideal for punching out these large nymphs and for solidly setting the hook when the strike occurs.

I use weight forward floating bass bug taper fly lines coupled with 9-foot leaders tapered down to 0x to 2x for most of this fishing. Very early in the season when high water is a problem, and late in the year when cold water has them holding on the bottom, I often use a Hi-D fast sinking tip fly line with a 3-foot leader tapered to 0x.

Through trial and error in thousands of hours of nymph fishing for bass, I have narrowed my selection to the three patterns listed below for these three hatches. Don't get suckered into that well-meaning advice that any old fly is good enough for smallmouth bass. Nothing could be further from the truth. What was the largest smallmouth that fell to your nymph last year? Anyway, the ones I'm now using are a damselfly nymph of soft olive fur and a short olive marabou tail in a size 10 4x long hook, well weighted. The hellgrammite I like is a soft black and gray concoction with gray pinchers and a black extended body which my angling friends have named Murray's Hellgrammite. There are many good stonefly nymphs on the market, but I am fully convinced that Charley Brooks' dark stonefly nymph will out-produce all the rest. The last two flies I like to tie in size 4 and 6 on well weighted 3x long shank hooks.

If you are willing to anticipate the hatch and closely observe what nature is doing, I'm sure your catch and pleasure will be elevated in direct proportion to your effort. □

July Journal

Boating Education Hotline

A new toll free hotline is in service to give boaters up-to-date information on boating safety courses being offered in their area, such as those offer by the U.S. Power Squadron and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The number is: (800) 336-BOAT.

Documentary on Bay Wins First Place

A documentary film on the Bay sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has won the coveted Golden Eagle Award given annually by the Council on International Non-theatrical Events (CINE).

"Chesapeake Horizons" was selected as the winner in an Environmental Issues Category by a professional jury and was cited as an example of the "best in American cinematography." The 30-minute film will represent the U.S. in future international film festivals, CINE officials announced.

Russ Nichols Productions of Chevy Chase, Maryland completed the film in 1983 after 14 months of filming. Filmmakers Russ Nichols and Bob Cole covered the entire Bay for the project, and interviewed dozens of Bay characters, many of whom appear in the film and tell the story of a threatened Bay. "Chesapeake Horizons" also offers clues as to how residents of the Bay can do their share to help shape its future.

The film is available for sale or rental at a nominal fee, in 16mm prints or video cassettes. Please contact Rod Coggin at Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 162 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, (301) 268-8816. □

Growing Up Outdoors

Beaks and Feet

How do you tell a cardinal from a duck? They're both birds, aren't they? That's easy—they're both birds, but they look completely different: a duck is much larger than a cardinal, the feathers are colored differently, and so on.

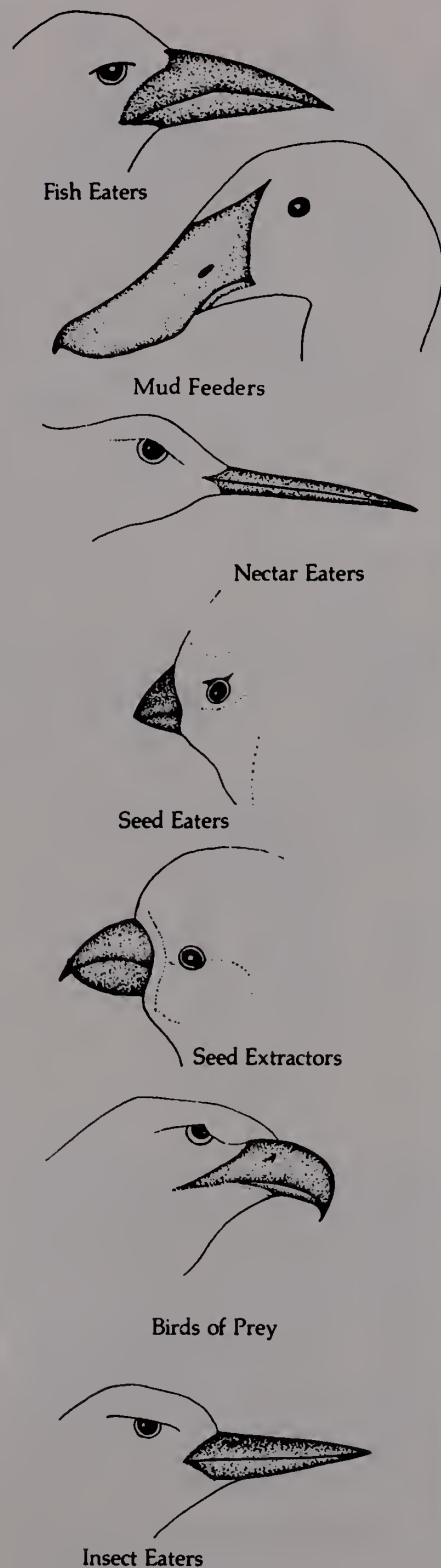
There are two particularly important things about birds that help us tell one from another, and they tell us some other things, too. Beaks and feet tell us what birds eat and where they live. These physical characteristics are *adaptations*, that is, they are features which help a creature survive in a particular area or *habitat* (the creature's home).

Let's go back to the cardinal and the duck. Think about where a cardinal lives, and about where you find ducks. Why would their feet need to be different?

Ducks live in and around water, and they swim. Look at the pictures of feet printed on the next page. Can you find the kind that a duck has? Think about why that type of foot is good for a duck to have.

If you have ever seen a cardinal in your back yard, think about what it was doing. Most likely it was perched on a tree branch, or perhaps on your bird feeder. Could you perch on a tree branch? Could a duck? Why not? Try to find the type of foot a cardinal would need to have to hold onto a branch. (Remember—a bird doesn't have any hands, so it needs to hold on with its feet.)

We also use our hands to eat, but a bird can't do that. It uses its beak to gather food. Many of the birds that visit your backyard eat seeds—that's why you put seeds in a birdfeeder. But could a duck or a hummingbird or an eagle eat seeds? Why not? Could a cardinal or a finch eat a fish? How are the beaks of different birds



July Journal



Wading



Swimming



Scratching



Feathered



Perching



Preying



Climbing

adapted to the food they eat? A duck digs for its food in mud. Find a duck-type beak on the previous page. Find a beak that looks like a cardinal could use it to eat seeds.

The next time you're in the forest, a marsh, a field, around a lake or on a river, or you're just looking out your window, look closely at the beaks and the feet of the birds you see, and figure about what those birds eat, and where they live.

Birds are adaptable creatures!

by Sarah Bartenstein

illustrations by Phyllis Saroff, reprinted from the Songbird Study Kit



Francis N. Satterlee

Personalities

Robert S. Crigler

Working with youngsters seems to come as naturally as breathing to Bob Crigler. He really enjoys being able to help them understand about the outdoors and wildlife. His interest in people is not just confined to the younger generation, for he also dearly loves associating with sportsmen and women of all ages in his job as Virginia Game Warden for Madison County.

Madison County is in every sense of the word "home" to Bob Crigler. He was born in the house in which he now lives in the community of Brightwood in that county. The first section of that dwelling was erected in 1732; the other sections were added in 1800 and 1900. His grandfather

and father also lived in the, by now, historic home place.

It is situated on some 300 acres of good farm land that Bob helped work, beginning when he was very young. As he was growing up, there was no time for summer jobs elsewhere, for there was work aplenty right at home for him, his two brothers and three sisters.

Following graduation from Criglersville High School, Bob enrolled in an apprentice school of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company where he trained as a ship fitter. In 1943 he was drafted into the United States Navy and was trained as a firecontrolman at installations located in Jacksonville, Florida and Treasure Island, California. He was then assigned to duty on board the cruiser *U.S.S. Birmingham* and served in the South Pacific prior

to being discharged in 1946.

Returning to the farm in Virginia, he pursued that life until becoming employed with the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries in April of 1956 as a game warden assigned to Madison County, where he still serves today.

During his career with the Commission, Bob has been responsible for the training of over 10,000 students in the hunter safety program. He helped start the very first Fish-For-Fun area in the Old Dominion on the Rapidan River and was instrumental in helping to establish the first "Kid's Day" trout fishing program in Virginia. In this program, children 12 years of age and under may fish on a specially designated area of the Rose River on the opening day of trout season. The program is a cooperative venture among Jimmy Graves (the owner of the land through which the section of the Rose River runs), the Rapidan River Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Virginia Game Commission.

Since that original "Kid's Day" observance, other Virginia Chapters of Trout Unlimited have also scheduled successful observances in various locations throughout the Old Dominion.

He and his wife, the former Sarah White from Madison County, have four children, three girls and one boy. They make their home on the family farm in the Brightwood Community and attend the Hebron Lutheran Church in Madison. Bob likes to tell about that church of which he is quite proud. It was built in 1740 and the same building is used today, making in the oldest continuously operating Lutheran Church in the United States. In the accompanying photo, Warden Bob Crigler is shown with eight-year-old Kevin Ryan from Rixeyville. The Sycamore Park School (Culpeper) second grader was one of the hundred of youngsters who participated in the annual "Rose River Romp" in 1984. □

by Francis N. Satterlee



Hacking tower

Lou Hinshelwood

Non-Game Update

The Peregrine Falcon

The peregrine falcon is one of several endangered species benefitting from Virginia's Non-Game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program. During the early 60's, the peregrine disappeared from Virginia and the other eastern states. The loss of this falcon was largely due to pesticide poisoning which interfered with the bird's reproductive system.

The Virginia Game Commission, in cooperation with Cornell University, is attempting to restore the falcon to a portion of its former range. To do this, we use a process called "hacking." Incubator-hatched chicks are shipped to Virginia to be reared and released. Later, when the birds mature, they return to the site where they were hacked and, we hope, nest without further need of assistance from us.

Hacking towers have been constructed on some of the Barrier Islands and Virginia's Eastern Shore. The birds are reared in boxes which rest on platforms supported by 25-foot utility poles. The birds historically nested on cliffs in the Appalachian Mountains, from Maine south. The towers serve

as artificial cliffs. Several birds were also hacked from a building in the city of Norfolk. The eastern part of the state was chosen for several reasons, including the relative ease in transporting, erecting and tending the hacking boxes. There is also an abundance of natural prey species, so the birds can practice their hunting skills. The absence of great horned owls, a predator of the young birds, was another reason for choosing the Eastern Shore. Dr. Mitchell Byrd of the College of William and Mary, project coordinator, has been looking at potential mountain sites for future releases.

The chicks are placed in the boxes and fed domestic quail and chicken until they are old enough to fly and hunt on their own at approximately 13 weeks of age. Since 1978 when the first three Virginia hacked birds dispersed from a tower on Cobb Island, 76 additional birds made it successfully through fledging and dispersed from the sites.

In 1982 a pair of adult falcons set up a territory at Assateague on the hack tower there and successfully hatched three young. During the 1983 nesting season the pair at Assateague reared four young. These seven birds were the first peregrines hatched in Virginia in over 20 years. There is a different male at Assateague this year and no eggs were laid. This year, another pair at Great Fox Island is incubating a clutch of eggs for the first time.

There are eight towers in Virginia; some of these have adult birds on them, although no nesting has so far occurred. Additional towers will be erected in the future to serve as nesting platforms. This year, young birds will be hacked at the towers on Russell and Cobb Islands.

Funding for this project and those affecting other endangered and non-game species is provided by the voluntary contributions of concerned citizens. These contributions can be made in either of two ways: You may designate on your state income tax form that all or a portion of your state tax refund be donated to the pro-

—July Journal—

gram. Or, if you are not due a refund, or you want to contribute at some time during the year after "tax time," you may send a check directly to the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Non-Game Program, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.

For more information about the program, write to the above address. □

by Susan Gilley

Field Notes

Animals, Birds and Bees

The youth at the Rappahannock Juvenile Center have been enjoying the programs and services of the Game Commission since 1981. The purpose of the Center is to serve delinquent youth from the counties of Green, Orange, Madison, Louisa, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and the City of Fredericksburg until the Judge determines disposition.

Each month we present a program. The topics are many and vary each month: snakes, fish and game laws, hunter safety, boat safety or a non-game program using Game Commission slides and film. Animal and bird mounts and preserved animal skins are used in discussing habits, habitat, foods, and benefits of animals and birds.

The youth are always ready to enter the discussion with good questions and comments about the topics.

Some months there are special guests presenting the program. One is J.J. Mason, Jr. a former game warden who is now a forensic scientist. His hobby is taxidermy.

In one of Mr. Mason's programs he demonstrated mounting a chipmunk; in another, a whippoorwill was mounted. We saw the mounts develop step-by-step and at the same time learned the history of taxidermy.

Mr. Mason has mounted some of the animals and birds we use regularly in programs.

Another popular guest is Lewis Goodman of Stafford County whose hobby is beekeeping.

He has built a special bee colony enclosed in glass to use in his presentation about honeybees. He tells about the building of the bee hive and the duties of the different bees in the colony. There is only one queen bee in the hive at one time. He marks the queen bee with white paint to make her easier to see among the bees. We learned how essential the honey bee is to pollinate our crops to produce more food for man and animals. One high point of this presentation is getting to eat some of the honey from Mr. Goodman's bee hives.

Each month the program closes with refreshments prepared by Betty Pittman. □

by Lt. H.H. Pittman

Letters

The Popular Morel

Enjoyed your article in the May issue on the morel mushrooms.

Being originally from Michigan, I ate them while growing up.

Every spring we find a few in our woods in Virginia Beach and thoroughly enjoy them. They have a much better taste than those bought in a store.

Donald R. French
Cdr. USN (Ret)
Virginia Beach

Your articles on Mt. Rogers and the tasty morel were indeed timely and the photos were A-1.

Oldtimers in the Blue Ridge Mountains used to tell stories about the morel; only they called them "miracles." They said it was a miracle if you could find them; but they had their locations already staked for years.

So give us more of the same.

Richard Salzer
Annandale

Mt. Rogers

As a past president and active member of our Mt. Rogers Citizens Development Corporation, I wish to congratulate you and thank you for the outstanding write-up and color photos ("Pilgrimage to Mt. Rogers, May 1984 *Virginia Wildlife*"). It was extremely well done, very informative, and will no doubt make more people aware of our fine Naturalist Rally conducted each spring.

Thank you again for a job well done.

W.G. Waters
Damascus

We understand from participants in this year's Rally that several people attended for the first time this year as a result of having read the article. We're delighted!—Managing Editor

Litter Letters

I was impressed with the article on litter by Janet Shaffer ("Stewards of Tomorrow," June 1984 *Virginia Wildlife*). For the past several years I have been involved in the subject of litter in Henrico County; not to mention my personal concern about our country as a whole. Having served as Chairman of "Keep Henrico Beautiful" for three years, and presently still active, largely in the area of enforcement, I have a great appreciation for Ms. Shaffer's interest.

I commend this article as required reading for every citizen of our fine state, and recommend you forward a copy of her writing to the executives of Keep America Beautiful! I know they too will more than agree with her message to the readers of your magazine.

Ross Carter
Highland Springs

While I applaud your concern with the necessity for improvement of our efforts to eliminate litter, I must say I disagree with the thrust of the article. While the author lists some statistics to show glowing results, her article

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points to the fact that our present system is a failure. She chooses to overlook the most practical solution to the problem, a simple deposit on all bottles and cans. Bottle bills work in nine states. They achieve outstanding results, immediate results, results highly visible to the public, and best of all, results that cost the taxpayers nothing.

*Madison E. Marye
Shawsville*

Senator Marye represents the citizens of the 37th Senatorial District in the Virginia State Senate.—Managing Editor

Gone Bats?

The picture of the bat on page 17 (May issue): was the picture of the bat printed upside down or was the bat flying upside down?

*H. W. Martin
Richmond*

The photo is printed right side up; that's the way a bat "hangs out" in its cave. (He's not flying; he's "perched" in that position.)

Several years ago we published a photo of a bat, and the printer, having decided that our art director didn't

know which end was up, turned the photo around. Fortunately, we caught the mistake before the magazines were printed!—Managing Editor

About The Authors

Gerald Almy of Woodstock is a hunting and fishing editor for *Sports Afield*. He has been a regular contributor to this and other outdoor publications. **Elizabeth Murray** was a regular columnist for *Virginia Wildlife* for many years as author of "In Nature's Garden." Readers still ask about her, so we are pleased to feature her article in this month's issue. Mrs. Murray lives in Charlottesville. **Parke Rouse, Jr.** is a graduate of Washington & Lee University and a well-known author. He lives in Williamsburg. Fly fishing expert **Harry Murray** runs Murray's Fly Shop in Edinburg, writes for *Virginia Wildlife*, and instructs anglers in the finer points of fly fishing. **Spike Knuth** is the Game Commission's audio-visual supervisor; his photos, paintings and articles appear in the magazine frequently.



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Bird of the Month

The Great Blue Heron

Nearly every watercourse, even the smallest of farm ponds, has its resident great blue. For the bird ranges widely, across the entire continent, and south to the Galapagos. Nearly five feet tall, of elegant, serpentine proportions, it seldom fails to attract attention and interest.

Popularly, and incorrectly, referred to as a "crane," it often remains nothing more than a voice in the river mist or a solitary presence along a reedy shoreline. A fertile source, indeed, for the creation of myth and superstition.

Buffon, the early French naturalist, conjured all sorts of visions about the great blue, merely from the specimens sent to him. He describes the bird as "exhibiting the picture of wretchedness, anxiety and indigence; condemned to struggle perpetually with misery and want; sickened with the restless cravings of a famished appetite." One wonders in what condition his specimens arrived, and how well they were prepared.

Even Alexander Wilson, the pioneer American ornithologist, fell under the spell. He writes in *American Ornithology* (1810) that "the great heron is said to be fat at the full moon, and lean at its decrease," a belief likely spawned by the bird's proclivity to night feeding. From this habit doubtless arises the belief that

the breast of the heron sheds a phosphorescent light, as is maintained by several early writers on natural history. Some country folk hold to this day that the appearance of a "crane" betokens coming rain.

The wary nature of the great blue contributes to this aura of mystery. Only the most dedicated birders have seen the nest. For in the breeding season herons retire to the most isolated swamps, often on remote islands. There they gather in colonies, placing their flimsy platforms in the tallest of trees. (In some regions they may nest close to the ground, as along the coast of Texas, where they build in cactus and yucca. And they don't always nest in groups; some pairs nest alone on buoys or channel markers.)

In Virginia, however, all recorded nests have been a part of a typical heronry. During recent years, 15 to 20 separate sites have been used, all on the coastal plain near Tidewater. There is no evidence of nesting in the piedmont or mountain provinces, though non-nesting great blues may summer anywhere in the state.

The breeding season begins early. Egg-laying does not begin until April, but herons begin to congregate at the site weeks earlier. A brief communal gathering occurs before the nest sites are selected. This ritual takes place in an open area, a beach, mudflat or meadow, near the heronry. The first arrivals stand, hunched, motionless, facing each other but silent and detached. There may be a brief greeting of sorts to incoming birds—an unfolding of

wings, a few skips and jumps—but no real courtship or mating. Nor does there seem to be any competition for mates or territory.

But this affair does seem to stimulate the reproductive instinct, and males soon begin to perch atop the old nests. Some collect twigs and begin repairs. The females are attracted later by much posturing and squawking.

The young are fed with much the same food as that eaten by the adults: fish, crabs, snakes and frogs, even mice and rats. But it is partially digested by the parents, and then regurgitated for the hungry youngsters.

The young are grotesque, scruffy-looking, awkward clowns, but in several weeks they resemble the adults in plumage, and have gained some grace and confidence. After fledging, they lose all attachment to the heronry, but are still attended by the parents.

Until their third year, when great blues reach maturity, they wander great distances. Like others of their tribe, they first have a tendency to drift northward. Eighteen young banded at a heronry in Maryland were recovered between July and October. All were found in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Banding has also shown that at the onset of cold weather, both the adults and young take long migratory flights. Bands have been recovered from Florida, Cuba and the Bahamas from birds ringed at the same Maryland location. □

by John W. Taylor



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